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Congo News Letter

Archives

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CONGO NEWS LETTER

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. . The Absolute . . .

Truth itself must timeless be,
Surging through eternity,
Waiting but for man to heed
Challenge to the soul's felt need.

See th'eternal threads through time
Holding strong man's forward climb;
Sifting out the fruitless pace,
Needing never to retrace.

Claim its power, oh wav'ring man.
Find within its master-plan
Guidelines, constant through the storm
Shaping matter into form.

— EMILY KEYES

BEFORE THE CRADLE

DOROTHY WISEMAN

IN the eyes of our Congolese people family life centers around procreation. To be an expectant mother is cause for honor and respect. To be married two years, or even one year often, without conceiving is a possible cause for divorce, especially among our non-christians.

Many of our people look with amazement at a missionary who has lived happily for years with a wife who has borne him no children. One childless missionary wife had worked for some years in Congo. When the Congolese discovered that she was to become a mother they rejoiced, and some of the women exclaimed to her, "Mama, thanks be to God, at last you are complete !" (or whole). In their eyes she had been incomplete until she had a child.

When the heathen woman becomes pregnant her father ties a cord around her wrist to avoid abortion and to give her a safe delivery, later he sends heathen medicines also, to be rubbed on as a fetish. When labor begins she is surrounded by the old women of the village whose practices are anything but scientific or Christian! So unbearable are these practices that many a young mother to be has run off to hide in the bushes or the forest, to bear her child alone and unattended, rather than endure them. When the child is born hot ashes are rubbed on the cord and it is bitten in two, not tied, and many many babies die of cord infection and tetanus, while many mothers are lost from hemorrhage or infection.

In contrast to this picture are the clean mission maternities where prenatal care is given the expectant mothers and they go home with real *live* babies ! In our prenatal clinics, conducted by missionary doctors or nurses, each woman is examined and treated. There we pray together and the women are taught something about the care of this precious gift God is giving to them.

Many women come to the prenatal clinics if they are ill only to drink free medicines, but still deliver in the village. However more and more women are delivering at the mission hospital because they are now beginning to realize that those who do return with not only a small new layette, consisting of two White Cross shirts and two baby blankets, but a living baby as well !

In our prenatal clinics we encourage the women to let us teach them to sew. They learn to make baby blouses out of quilting blocks. The blouse remains at the hospital, and the mother sews on it each time she comes to prenatal clinic and *if* she delivers at the hospital she receives her layette plus the blouses she has made. However progress is slow and many still come to us *after* delivery with injuries requiring extensive surgery, and having delivered a dead baby.

Our women are small, probably due to malnutrition, and many babies are born dead if proper care is not forth coming. I remember well one expectant mother who came to us. To the usual inquiry, "How many babies have you had ?" she replied, "This is the fifth." "How many are alive ?" I asked. "All four of them were born dead," she replied. I cried, "But mama, why did you wait so long to come to us for help ? Our doctor can operate on you and give you a live baby !"

She agreed to deliver at the hospital; Doctor did a Caesarean and I shall never forget the radiance of her face, filled with wonder, amazement, and awe, as I laid a live baby in her arms ! At last she too was whole !

A POUND A DAY

VIRGINIA NICKERSON

WEDNESDAYS, Thursdays and Saturdays are the most scriptural days in our Banza Manteke medical work.

We go out into the highways and byways and compel them to come in ....

Many are weighed in the balances and are found wanting ...

And there's weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth — no less cramatic because these dentitions are deciduous and incomplete. For these are the days we hold our weekly baby clinics, one here on the station and three out in neighboring villages at distances of from fifteen to twenty miles.

Of course, no one knows them as baby clinics, nor even as *consultations des nourrissons*, which is their impressive French title.

From missionary to village mama, everyone calls them "kilos" (an English equivalent would be "pounds") because each mother is told her child weighs so many *kilos*, so many grams. It's really quite evident. By the same linguistic gymnastics, the villages of railroad laborers near here is called Pikasi (Pee-ka-see) because the men all use pickaxes (what else !) in their work.

The essential ingredients of a successful *kilo* are four: personnel, the nurse (the "one-who-weighs") and at least one helper; a scale; assorted medicines; and a generous quantity of babies and mothers. Also nice, but elective, are a wide spreading shade tree or shelter of some sort, a table and chairs, and small pieces of soap to give to the women who come in time to hear the Bible or hygiene lesson that precedes the main feature.

The babies, four hundred of them each week from Pikasi and 19 other villages, jog and bounce their way to *kilo*, each tied to his mother's back, his head bobbing at every step, and only a glimpse of small pink toes reveals his presence to anyone who meets his mother in the road. Most of them come dressed in their Sunday best, though sometimes this sartorial splendor is not donned until the last minute before the *kilo* begins, in spite of the fact that the one-who-weighs insists on birthday suits as proper dress for the occasion.

The one-who-weighs has also bounced her way to kilo over washboard roads in the ambulance which the native welfare society gave us last August, and all medicines with instructions to shake well are pre-palpitated and ready for use. Arrival in the village is a rather noisy affair, for we enter honking as a first call to *kilo*; second and third calls are either the horn again or the school or dispensary bell. As all this noise also attracts a considerable number of dogs, goats, and older children *kilo* kids are never older than three) it takes a little while to chase off the animals, calm the children, set up the scale, unpack the medicines, and welcome the mothers. Only then can we begin.

We sing first — "Brighten the Corner Where You Are" or "We Are Climbing Jacob's Ladder" — and then have our lesson. These are kept very simple, partly so the women will be sure to understand them, and mostly because the Kikongo of the one-who-weighs is so limited. Even the simplest lessons have their pitfalls.

One week we used a flannelgraph to tell the story of Jesus blessing the little children. As we reached the part where the disciples tell the mothers, "Take your children away and leave Jesus alone, do you hear ?" all the *kilo* mothers replied with one voice, "Yes, we hear." For one awful moment I was afraid that they would all get up and walk away ! After the lesson one of the Christian mothers leads the group in prayer.

The children are called one at a time to be weighed and examined — "Not Dead" Joshua, "Thanksgiving" Helen, and "Many Troubles" Alfonse. Their names are not necessarily indicative of their attitudes. "Thanksgiving" Helen may be vocally unhappy about the whole affair, while little "Many Troubles" laughs joyfully as you check for an enlarged spleen, as sign of malaria. Reactions don't always go according to size either — or sex — or degree of awakeness — for even after a year and a half, most of the

children are not yet convinced that this white person who prods and pokes can be treated with other than the greatest caution.

The most popular medicine in the box is the castor oil, and mothers request it as the panacea which cures fever, itch, pink-eye, anemia, ringworm, cough, and any other symptom or combination of symptoms. However, they philosophically accept the fact that the one-who-weighs is prejudiced against it, except in the most unusual circumstances, and they accept the quinine, cod liver oil, and other substitutions we offer with good grace. All of the children who are weighed receive one dose of quinine, and those who have any indications of active malaria take home enough for a daily dose for a week.

Every two or three weeks we have small pieces of soap for those who come in time to hear the Bible lesson, and every four to six months, depending on how faithful the women have been in bringing their children to *kilo*, they receive a little dress or sunsuit from the White Cross supplies that have come from the churches at home. After a year and a half, the women are only now beginning to see the relation of cause (attendance at *kilo*) to effect (number of dresses received.) The mothers say "Thank you" for all these gifts — the medicines and soap and dresses — but for the garments especially, they say "Fiaukidi", a thank you that also means "I hope we do this again !"

When the last child has been weighed, the last mother counselled on what to do about whooping cough or cradle cap, and the medicine box repacked, then it is time for the one-who-weighs to write the report of the kilo. Often we find that we have given more treatments than we have had children, for the same children may have two, three, or four different things wrong requiring treatment, truly a "Many Troubles." Then it's home again, home again, as fast as the truck and roads will allow, to get ready for the next trip. With *kilos*, there's always another just around the corner.

"He who cries much gets little help."
(*ex. If a person comes to the doctor when he is not sick, he will not be heeded when he is sick.*)

PRIMARY SCHOOL AGE

JEAN L. LUCKEY

WHAT does it mean to boys and girls of nine or ten to fourteen or fifteen years of age to be Christians and to be in the Mission school? In seeking some first-hand information that might be shared with you here, I asked this question of some of our fifth year boys. We talked as we walked along thru tall grass and forest on our way to conduct evangelistic services in nearby villages. This in itself is something they would never be doing if they were not Christians and not in the Mission School.

"If we were not here with you, Mama, we'd just have to sit in our villages." Sit in ignorance and in the darkness of superstition and fetish worship. It is a life of idleness, broken occasionally by a bit of hunting. There is no purpose to it, nothing to look forward to but more of the same. At the age when they should be coming to school, the boys must enter an initiation camp. Even some of the boys who do come to us have first gone through the initiation camp. All who do not come to us certainly must. The initiation camp is for boys from 10 or 12 to 14 or 16 years of age. Frequently boys drop out of the regional school for a time to attend the camp. It may last one or two years. During that time the boys cannot return to their families or villages. They live in their own village. They are not allowed to see or be seen by women during their initiation period. They are in the charge of the village witch doctor. They are taught to steal. They are taught the history of their people. They learn something of the fetishes. At last they participate in a wild dance that becomes more and more frenzied and is then followed by the circumcision ceremony. During their initiation period they must prove their physical endurance in various ways.

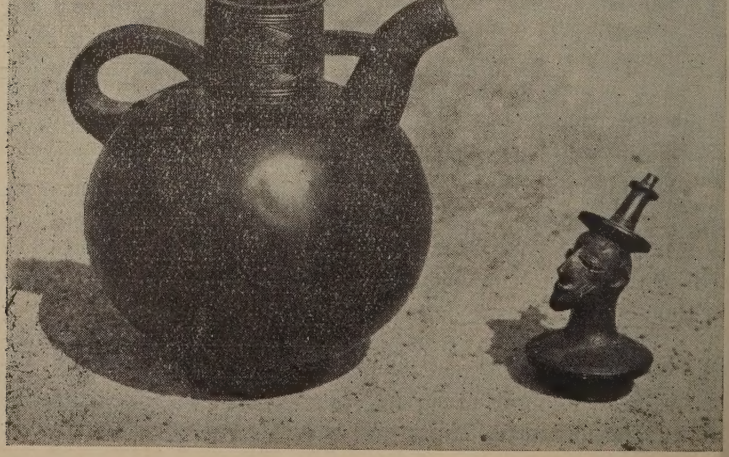
A number of the boys who are now in school at Boko have already had this experience. It is just so much more that must be overcome in bringing them to Christ. Some boys who want to be Christians dare to run away from the camp, but many are forced by their elders to stay and dare not run away.

The boy who is in Primary School learns first of all the Christian way of life. He learns the usual Primary school lessons. He learns better methods of agriculture and puts them into practice in the school gardens. Those who prove themselves able can look

forward to training as pastors, teachers, nurses or office workers. A number are looking forward to secondary school. The boy who comes to Primary school has a life of promise to look forward to.

For the girls too there is little to look forward to in life. They go to the gardens with their mothers. They learn to prepare and cook the food. Girls who are not Christian and do not go to school can expect nothing better than their mothers have known. They may be used to pay a father's debt — given in marriage often to a man much older and already possessing one or two wives. But the girls who come to the Mission school and who become Christian may learn to do many things — above all Christian home-making. They learn handwork and better methods of gardening and home-making. They have the opportunity of a Christian marriage.

To become a Christian and to come to the Mission School means a complete change of life for boys and girls in Congo. As we visit the Bayaka villages, however, we find many children who have not and will not come to the Mission and who, unless we seek them, will not become Christians. They need us, and above all they need Jesus Christ.



TEEN AGERS

W. F. Robbins

"TATA, four of our boys are gone! They have left the class. We followed them to their village and tried to get them back, but the elders and especially the *Ngang'a Nkanda*, (or the leader of the circumcision camp), would not let the boys go." This has been, with variations, an oft repeated report from our regional school teachers.

Again and again the circumcision camps have interfered with our school program in the district and with our attempts to train boys and young men for Christian leadership. The ceremony of circumcision is considered by the Bayaka people a very fundamental part of the Bayaka society. During this ceremony the boy is formally graduated into manhood. He becomes a member of the tribe and a defender of the tribe.

During the weeks and months that the boys are in the circumcision camps they must live in seclusion. They may not roam the streets of their village. They must never be seen by women and girls. Their only article of clothing is a grass skirt. They do not bathe. Their months of seclusion seem long and tiresome even to the boys. What was once considered a privilege by the boys is more and more becoming distasteful to many of them.

What about the girls? I cannot find that the girls are taken in groups, as the boys are, to be trained in the ways of the tribe. There is some training given individual girls to prepare them for womanhood. My knowledge of this, however is slight.

Some months ago I visited one of the most retarded areas of our field. At evening I entered a large village; it was long, consisting of a single street lined on both sides with huts. We met the joyful fathers and mothers. We met the girls and the small children and the babies. But where were the teen age boys? It is unusual to find these missing in a village. They are usually the dynamos that produce the greatest exhibition of enthusiasm and the largest amount of noise. Where were the boys? I asked the fathers and mothers and their answers were evasive, so I decided to try to find out.

Early the next morning, just as the people were beginning to come out of their huts I walked down the one street of the village. I looked to the right and to the left for a sign. Finally I saw it. Off to one side there were two upright poles with a third fastened across the top making a sort of a gateway. From the top pole hung raffia streamers which reached two thirds of the way to the ground.

I went through this gate and down the small path beyond. The chief shouted to me. "There is nothing there, Tata. That goes out to the grassy plains." I shouted back, "I want to go to the grassy plains." There was grass truly enough. The grass was a foot or more taller than I. I could see a few steps forward along the path and a few steps backward, that was all. The chief followed me.

After walking about fifteen minutes I saw festive evidences. At the top of long poles which formed a high wall around a circular enclosure, huge grass plumes waved in the breeze. The walls were of interwoven palm branches and leaves. The plumes at the top reminded one of flags on castle walls. I went inside.

When I entered, a shout of surprise came from about a dozen naked boys as they bolted out of a rear gate with two adult leaders. They scattered through the grass in every direction. In a moment nature had hidden them and there was quiet. The chief had followed me in. I turned to him and asked, "Is this, chief, an example of the customs of your people? Have they done evil that they should run, this way, like scared cats?" The chief was ashamed and began to call them back. One by one a few of the braver boys came. But the camp leaders and the majority of the boys stayed hidden. The camp leader does not want to identify himself, he must not let any white man see him in the capacity of camp leader.

As I looked into the faces of the few boys who had come back my heart longed to give them something far better than this. They were so dirty. Their bodies were greased and smelly. I longed to make them understand the Christ of salvation and his sufferings for them. When they had fastened on their grass skirts I taught them a hymn and then told them about Jesus, His death and His resurrection. I invited them to leave all this and follow Jesus.

One of them spoke up, "We would like to leave this, but we are here because our fathers put us here. We are not allowed to go into the village. We are not allowed to see our mothers and sisters and we cannot go away from here. We must stay here until they see fit to let us go." I asked, "How soon will they let you go?" "Nobody knows, we shall stay here until our parents pay the camp leaders money and goats. Sometimes our fathers have no money or goats and then we stay here a long time," they answered. When I left those few boys that day they were serious and earnest. I felt that I had reached their hearts. As I went about my work in the near-by villages that day I could not keep them out of my mind.

The grass hut where the missionaries and the government officials stay at night is usually about a hundred and fifty yards from the village and therefore lonely with grass and forest all about. Before the sun had risen, the next morning, while I was preparing to leave for another part of the field, I heard a slight noise outside. I looked out and here were the boys with whom I had spoken the day before along with all the other boys of the camp. What a sight it was to behold them as they came stealing through the tall wet grass, not appearing in a group, but one by one, not exposing themselves until they had entered inside the hut. "*Tata*," they said, "Sing with us again and teach us about the Lord Jesus." Needless to say, that is just what I did. For over an hour I talked to those boys and at the end I called for decisions and two boys definitely expressed their desire to follow Jesus. Others were desirous of doing so but were afraid. All wanted to accept Him, but some did not dare to.

I am going back there next week. I trust that I will find, yes, I have faith that I will find some who have left the old life for the life in Christ. Often in all parts of our field we are seeing the "Teen agers" stepping out for Christ and His salvation. This they do against customs and against the desires of the village elders and fathers. Sometimes they suffer because neither mothers nor fathers will help these boys with food while they are in school. If they succeed, it is often in opposition to all customs and leading from the tribe.

NOT THE END BUT THE BEGINNING

EMILY KEYES

COMMENCEMENT speakers at home often remind the graduates and the audience that the diploma, seemingly marking the end of a course of study, the end of certain relationships, in reality is a symbol of the beginning of a life of new responsibilities, new things to learn, new loads to carry. This is just as true — or more so — in Congo.

Next year will be the first time that Protestant Missions in Congo will complete a secondary school course comparable to high school at home. There have been two of our Congo Christians, Emile Disengomoka of our sister British Baptist Mission and our own Remy Malutama from Banza Manteka who have had doors opened to them for study *outside* of Congo and are now returning to shoulder greater responsibilities than their brothers have been prepared to bear. We are looking toward the day when more will be qualified to follow in their steps. But, until now, there has been no full class of even high school graduates, so we are eagerly anticipating next year's graduating class from Kimpese, our joint-mission institution.

Until now, our highest trained teachers and pastors have had but three or four years of training after completing sixth grade. They are carrying their responsibilities well — as we are constantly inspired by their devotion and the work they produce above and beyond what they should be expected to do, much of which would be entrusted only to college graduates at home. And they are our *best* trained folk. But there are not enough of them to do the work that is before us here — and others, less qualified must be called upon to fill in the gaps.

For a few years now, on several of our stations, we have had classes of *Ecole d'Apprentissage Pédagogique*, preparing teachers qualified in the eyes of the government to teach first and second grades, in spite of the fact that they have completed but two years of classes and practice-teaching beyond their own 4th or 5th grade preparation! But, with our shortage of teachers, since they are next in line to our Kimpese graduates, most of them are teaching in higher classes — some of them in fifth or sixth grades! They,

like their missionaries, must learn to lean heavily on the Strength greater than they — in order to carry the responsibilities laid upon them.

But many more than these receive certificates each year and enter into the work of the mission. The highest achievement of the greater part of our Congo young people is the completion of fifth, occasionally sixth, grade. These, too, enter into teaching, in spite of their lack of preparation, and necessity sometimes places them, too, in fifth and sixth year classrooms. In past years every fifth or sixth year graduate was required to teach a year before receiving his certificate of completion of studies. Even third and fourth grade "graduates" found places to teach, and a few of them due to their consecrated lives, have continued to bring lives, young and old, to know and accept Christ as Saviour and Lord.

It was interesting to look over the list of Vanga's 6th grade graduates of ten years ago. Of the 32 in the class, eleven are still in mission work, and had the opportunity to complete further classes — preparing them for their present work in the mission, one as pastor, two as carpenters, three as teachers and five as nurses. Others in the class gave several years of service to the mission before other work seemed brighter.

The rapid growth of our district, as well as our station work, has brought more and more students to the completion of primary education. Last year 325 youngsters graduated from fifth grade in the Vanga schools. This year we give final exams to over a thousand fifth-graders. Last year, 46 graduated from 6th grade in regional schools alone. This year more than 200 will be taking examinations. With numbers like that, it is understandable why we have to place untrained teachers in their schools. We still are not heartless enough to close the door to all of them just for the lack of higher-trained teachers. We must close the door to some, but it is a difficult job to say "No.". It becomes increasingly difficult as our students become younger and younger. In the past it was a different matter to say to young men of twenty or twenty-five, "You have finished fifth grade. Go teach!" It takes something that most of us lack to be able to face twelve and thirteen year-olds and say happily, "You have finished sixth grade, but there is not enough room at Kimpese or in the Banza Manteke secondary

schools, and we lack missionaries to begin another school. You are too small to teach. Go look for work yourselves." But that is what we are beginning to face now.

The day is here when we can no longer supply work for all fifth and sixth year graduates. Neither do we have enough schools to prepare them for the higher-trained teachers, pastors and nurses we are hungry for. We cannot have more schools until we have *more missionaries.*

Many of our alumni continue the witness of Christ in their work, wherever they are — as bookkeepers, store clerks, factory workers — and do much in the Work of the Kingdom as they work with others who do not know the Master. Feeling the need of greater fellowship, a Christian alumni association has been formed, permitting membership only to those in good standing in the church. They, too, see the need for greater training for future leaders and are acting as well as asking for help from their missionaries and the government. They have presented us with more than 35,000 frs. ($700) toward the building of the secondary school which has been scheduled for Vanga for several years now. They are doing what THEY can to provide better-trained leaders, and are finding it difficult to be patient while we must wait for lives in America to hear the call to "Come over and help us." We trust that the needed staff will arrive before the combination of enthusiasm and impatience reaches a danger-point within a rapidly growing group.

Occasionally we are disappointed with some who have studied in our schools and have entered into the work of the mission. Temptations come to them, too — and occasionally, some in whom we had believed, fail to measure up to the faith entrusted to them. We lose a few each year, but they are a slight minority in comparison with the hundreds in our work who remain faithful, working to the full measure of their capacities — and those whose consecration and sense of mission overflows in their every word and action. Many times we missionaries feel that they are carrying the Message of Christ to us, rather than receiving it from us.

MARRIAGE CUSTOMS IN THE CONGO

JEANNETTE TUTTLE

MAKENGO Jean, will you take Disuza Louise to be your wife to live together after God's ordinance in the holy bonds of marriage, and will you promise in the presence of God and before these witnesses to love her and comfort her, honor and cherish her, in sickness and in health, in prosperity and in adversity....." However different customs may be in different countries for the arrangement of a marriage, the christian marriage ceremony itself is much the same the world over. How can it be otherwise for the teachings of Christ are the same in every language.

Not many days ago I asked Ngwele, one of our students, if he planned to be married during this coming year of his internship. No one ever blushed more handsomely than he when he answered yes. "But," he went on to say, "the arrangements are not yet all made but I think that they will be finished so that I can be married before I return to Kimpese." In that last remark lies many of the differences between a Congolese courtship and an American one. Customs naturally vary according to tribes and areas but there are a few basic facts which remain the same to all. Very few marriages are transacted without the bridal price. But who are we to smile at that when our own young men usually pay out sums of money during courtship for presents to show their love and appreciation of their chosen ones, and who can estimate the amount of money spent in engagement rings? How can a congolese young lady know that her suitor really loves her if he is not willing to pay a good price for her ?

Many times, even yet, the maternal uncle takes the initial step in trying to find the right kind of wife for his nephew. The approaches are made, not to the young lady herself, but through her oldest maternal uncle. These uncles have a great responsibility, sometimes the young folks are consulted and sometimes they are not. This responsibility continues on after marriage in keeping the couple together. Divorces are few except for those couples who do not have children within the first two years. In some tribes wives may be acquired by inheritance as was the case with one of

our nurses at Sona Bata. In some instances girls are still married off in payment of debts, but amongst Christians the elders are beginning to see the wisdom of allowing the young people some choice for themselves. Hense Ngwele had probably made his choice, the girl had probably accepted his gift, and now it was up to the uncles to make the final arrangements.

When a young man finds the lady of his choice he will send her a gift, possibly a cloth from which she can make a dress or possibly some money with which she will buy things for their home. If she accepts this gift it is to say that she consents to his trying to make arrangements for her to become his bride. If she refuses, he knows that she is not interested. Assuming, however, that she accepts his gift he is then free to go to her parents, or more probably to her maternal uncles, or he may first go to his own uncle and have the arrangements made through him. These elders would first decide whether there was any reason why the two should not marry. Sometimes young folks are refused because they are third or fourth cousins on their mother's side. There is no barrier to marrying a cousin on the father's side. When it is decided that there is nothing to keep the couple from being married the aunts and uncles of the young lady on her mother's side will gather to decide the price. This is a very important reunion of the family and sometimes lasts for days, each one being sure that he receives his share. Not many years ago the amount of money demanded became so high that the government had to put a "ceiling" and this still holds if the young man's family wants to appeal to court. Some uncles will completely ignore a child, even refusing to help her if in need, until it is time for her to be married. For this reason it is very difficult to find foster parents for an orphan in this country. Even though the orphan has NO relatives while he is small, as soon as he is of marriageable age from out of nowhere they appear and claim their child.

The usual price fixed in gifts would be between $60.00 to $125.00. This is a large sum of money to a Congolese and would take him several months to earn. Often his father and brothers will help him knowing that he will return the help when the time comes for the brothers to be married. If a wife dies during the first few years of marriage a certain amount of this money must be return-

ed. After all, how else could he buy a new wife after so short a time? In some tribes some of this money is demanded to be repaid if the first child should die.

Not long ago we had the privilege of attending a beautiful wedding in the EPI church of one of our nurses to the daughter of a christian worker. It is one of the few marriages we know of where there has been absolutely no transaction of money between the families. May these young people appreciate the brave step which these parents are taking in standing out for what they believe to be Christ's teachings. As more and more parents take this stand do pray that our young people may keep ever before them the ideals of a christian home where both are Christians eager to build a home with Christ the center and with His teachings of mutual love and respect ever before them.

FAMILY LIFE—CHRISTIAN AND NON-CHRISTIAN

RUTH ENGWALL

ONE of the main features of African life is the almost complete separation of the sexes. Their rule has been from far back in their history, for men and women to work separately, sit separately and to eat separately.

For men to do women's work has in the past been unthinkable. Once I wanted to experiment making chalk for school purposes. I asked a moniteur to mix manioc flour with sifted white rock, but he answered that he never touched manioc flour. It was an impossible barrier and an excuse perfectly justifiable in his mind for only women worked with flour. Not long ago the wife of a pastor was coming out of the hospital after being hospitalized for some weeks. There were things to carry and her husband started to pick them them up, but the wife quickly said, "I'll carry them." Although she had been sick she would not let others see her husband carrying anything when she was near. She had been taught to be thoroughly ashamed to let her husband carry anything — to carry is women's work.

At every palaver, marriage or funeral, men and women sit in separate groups. At our church gatherings it is unusual to see a woman sit down on a bench where a few men already sit. She will go to the back rather and sit on the floor. I have often seen old grandmothers who have all their lives carried wood and water and done the gardening and cooking for their families, come into church carrying their low stools and the only place they could find to sit down would be behind many rows of benches full of little boys and those not so young. There they could not see anything and often they have complained to me that they could not hear anything.

For generations African men and women have eaten their meals separately. The custom has been for the men to eat by themselves in a *boko* i.e. a group of men who eat and talk together under a grass roof which has no walls. Each *boko* consists of a group of matrilineal uncles, nephews and their grandchildren, all related through their mothers who are sisters. In a small village there may be only one *boko* while in a large village there may be several. When we visit the villages we still see "thatched roof structures" used by men only, however they are disappearing slowly and a new type of *boko* is emerging. Many of the men have such nice new houses with comfortable dining room furniture etc. that they prefer their own houses to the thatched roof shelter. The *boko* idea however has not disappeared. Many groups of uncles and nephews still eat together going by turns from house to house. The wife of the house is not responsible for all the food because it has to come from all the wives of the men of the *boko*. Something new is happening and that is that some wives are being asked to eat with the men, the day they eat at her house. This is very new for more often than not she eats alone in the cook house or in a corner of the veranda. Some of the Christian men answer when I ask them whether they eat together with their wives, "Yes my wife eats with me at the table." Questioning further I have often learned that the wife eats with the boko. How can the husband and wife grow together and improve their marital relationships, when the husband is always with a group of men at every meal time, to whom he must give all his thought and attention ?

An African once said, "There is a degree of enmity between

husband and wife which lasts throughout married life." If no children are born to them her clan and his clan too, keep insisting on their getting a divorce. They can stir up all kinds of trouble while the underlying reason is "no children." To have standing in the community, both must be able to have children. The main cause however for enmity between husband and wife is financial. Each clan keeps pulling and demanding more and more financial support. If the husband keeps his wife in good cloth his clan brothers and sisters can become very hostile to her. The same is true also if the wife is too willing to help her husband and not her clan. Wife lover or husband lover they sometimes say in a derogatory way.

One of the girls in the Christian Family class asked, "Why is it that the men never want to tell their wives the amount of their salary check ?". The boys in the class quickly answered, "Because if they did their wives would insist on a larger and larger share being sent to her clan."

I asked the class if they knew of any Christian family where husband and wife shared their finances, having everything together. They did not know of any such family, but they said they knew of some mothers who would take from their own money to help the family in times of special need. This was hard for me to believe so I have enquired of a number of elders but they too say that as a rule married couples do not have their money together — each one keeps his own separately. I am glad however to report that there are Christian families who share everything and they are also the families who have the least marital difficulties and the most joy in their home relations.

The custom of keeping their money separately is detrimental to building good relations in the home. The husband has the support of his clan in trying to get the most out of his wife, and she has the support of hers in trying to get as much as she can out of him. This can only lead to constant friction. How can love and understanding between husband and wife grow in this continuous struggle ?

To end this article I can only say that we have barely begun to work on this problem of building Christian homes in Congo. The more we study it the more we realize the value and the great need

of developing Christian concepts in their home relationships. Christian ideals must have their roots in the home if they are to help lift the community.

OLD AGE IN THE CONGO

VIOLA L. SMITH

IT is difficult to think of old age for the Congolese without vivid memories of some of the "witches" who have found refuge at Kikongo . . . and some who never reached the place of refuge.

We were on our way to a nearby village one day when we suddenly came upon an old woman lying in the middle of the path. The jungle grass was so high that we didn't see her until we were upon her. She was lying there quite naked. The few square inches of loin cloth that she had been wearing were lying on the ground a few feet from her. She had been dead for about two days. The tropical sun had beaten upon her; the rain had pelted her unresisting form. All alone she lay there, with no one to care ..... no one to bury her. A thoughtful little beetle had carefully rolled one ball of dirt after another until he had partially buried her face. We could see the foot-prints of passers-by who had come upon her, and in their fright had rushed into the jungle grass and circled around that part of the path.

Her mat lay where it had fallen beside her. In it we found a little clay cooking-pot and part of a piece of mildewed *kwanga* (Congo bread). Her medical passport was wrapped in a large leaf, and that is how we came to know her name and her village.

My husband and I dug a grave by the side of the road and carefully placed the body of the old woman in her sleeping mat. It required care, for the body was already decaying. There was no casket, no flowers, no music. Our hearts were heavy as we turned away from the solitary grave, for we strongly suspected that we knew what had occurred. Our suspicions were soon confirmed.

The little old lady was a "witch"; at least that is what the people thought. She was very old; too old to work in the garden any more; too old to carry heavy gourds of water from the spring; too old to bear any more babies; too old ..... too old. There had been several deaths in her village so what would be more natural than to blame them on the "witch" in their midst.

If you believed in witches you would have thought it entirely normal that this woman's daughter should join with the rest of the villagers in chasing her mother away.

She wandered to the village where her son was living; but there, too, all calamity was blamed on her and once more she was chased away. She went to her remaining daughter, and there brutality was added to the insults cast upon her; the body we had buried bore the marks of stoning and beating.

We have given refuge to a number of "witches" at Kikongo. One day, when a new one had come to join our family, the medical helpers were in the laboratory discussing her. One of them looked up from the microscope and said: "The witches surely have it better now that you missionaries are here; why I remember when my grandfather died and my grandmother was considered a witch; they buried her in the ground with him with only her head above ground. Everyone in the village taunted her and persecuted her, and there she died. I was among those who made her last hours painful. I didn't know then that it was microbes and not witches which caused illness."

This picture of old age in Congo does not hold for all. With age, the men and some of the women take on added prestige. Many of them exercise tremendous power over the young people. An

older man who has accumulated a little money is able to choose the young and desirable women for his polygamous household, leaving the young men in a difficult position, especially as the young men are dependent on their maternal uncles for the bride price.

Such has been the lot of the old people in the Congo in which we have worked for 32 years. But that Congo is rapidly passing away. Radical changes have taken place in a very few years. Whereas the picture given above still holds in a large part of our field, the gospel of Jesus Christ with its power to transform lives, has brought great changes.

There was a large group of elderly women in the "women's section" of the church this morning. They cannot aspire to the felicity of the group of young wives of the Bible Institute students, who sat with their husbands and children as Christian families, but neither do they live in fear of being cast out as witches. Some of them are honored deaconesses and respected grandmothers. Jesus Christ has brought them peace, and honor and happiness.

There are still many old men who hold tremendous power over the young, but their number is rapidly diminishing. This is the day of the educated young folk who have entered into the mysteries of reading and writing and book learning, with the concurrent opportunities to earn more money than their elders ever knew existed. Young people are no longer dependent on the maternal uncle for the money to secure a wife. And oh, how they need the love and humility of Christ in their lives to help them through these years of transition, so that the words "Honor thy father and thy mother" may be the expression of love and compassion in their hearts for the old men and women who have not had the benefits of an education.

The vertiginous changes of the post-war years are generally considered in relation to the younger generation whose future will be so vastly different from the lives of their elders. But those same changes have wrested from the old people much of the power by which they exercised needed restraints; the wisdom they have acquired with the years must somehow be adapted to the changing times. And it is here that the missionary has a great opportunity as he brings to both the old and the young the Christ who can meet the needs of each.

DEATH IN A SAVAGE TRIBE

T. E. Bubeck

WHAT is death? One might as well ask: What is life? To know one would no doubt lead to the knowledge and understanding of the other. The desire to know and the attempt to understand is probably as old as the experience itself.

It is not hard to understand what the primitive must have thought when he met death. It is not hard to imagine his line of thought and deductions as he looked upon a body rigid, cold and unresponsive and so different from the body of the living person. What has happened to it? What is lacking which it previously possessed? What went forth at death with the last breath of the deceased? Thus men have always linked in their minds and in their speech the idea of soul and breath. These led to other speculations as to spirits, spiritism, ancestor worship, etc.

Soper[1] thinks the primitive was led to the inevitable conclusion that the soul left the body, and if at death why not on other occasions? Death is hard to understand, but so is sleep. In sleep friends come to us with startling clarity. They move and act, they speak and listen. No bound can be set to his travel. This is indeed, a world of occult powers and spiritual influences which one does well to respect and fear.

It would seem that to them not all of these spirits are personal. If it could be determined where they live and where they are housed it might be of great help. Mackenzie[2] says: "... they pack the world. There are housed spirits and nomad spirits, spirits which are content with their lodging in a fallen tree, in a rock, easy to be propitiated with a little offering of leaves, of shells, of seeds." But there are also malevolent spirits which mar births, which kill, spoil the crop and which cause bodily and mental illness. Milligan[3] would classify them as:

1. Ancestor spirits,
2. Spirits which make their residence in external objects,
3. Animistic spirits.

To this Milligan might have added a fourth, spirits of living people which can often become very harmful.

Among many primitives there seem to be ways to control evil spirits besides sacrifice to them. Addison[4] tells of the Australian aborigine who will cut off the right thumb of the corpse "so that the hostile soul cannot throw a spear, and the Baganda warriors who will cut out the eyes that the disfigured spirits may not haunt the survivors." (Figure that out if you can!)

One can easily understand how life in the bush in primitive society is one of constant fear. Together with the fear of death with fear of the unknown, there is the constant fear of the spirit world operating through even temporal and material forces. The white man cannot see how thickly these "millions of strange shadows" gather around his haunted brother. Where can he turn for deliverance from this relentless foe? It does not help him to belittle these beliefs. This fear and terror has become a definite motivating force in his life.

Paul[5] clearly confirms the judgment of most leading anthropologists that the savage possessed the knowledge of God. But "When they knew God...." instead of looking to Him for deliverance they "sacrificed to demons" and spirits who were more to be feared. Thence they began "to worship the creature more than the Creator...." Not denying that there were individuals who turned to God, but as in the experience of David,[6] they found many who were prepared to say: "There is no help for him in God." The great mass of them preferred to placate their fears with sacrifice to evil spirits and ancestor worship for when the primitive pays worship to a tree or to a stone it is not to the tree or to the stone that this homage is addressed but to the object influenced by some agent of the invisible world.

Some anthropologists regard ancestor worship with some uncertainty. Atkins[7] says, "... it may be worship, it may be a family council. But generally speaking the worship of the ancestral dead is a very old and deeply established custom... Gifts to the dead have furnished a basis for the whole great system of sacrifice.

Ancestor worship and communication in general calls for a native priesthood which is often combined with the political. "Among the Nyasaland people there is no priesthood class to lead their worship. The official on the occasion" Hetherwick[8] tells us "is usually the most important person in the community." Mac-

Kenzie[9] finds on the other hand that among the Konde the person most frequently connected with the spirits is the chief. He is the man "who speaks with God" and he is the man who "speaks with authority to the spirits." "Next, every chief has an official who may be called a priest... whose duty it is to go daily at the order of the chief to present an offering at the grave where the last chief was buried. He does not pray, he simply lays the offering upon the grave and departs."

In the Moanza area of our Baptist Congo field the *nkumu* or holy man in Kimbala is called *mudi-nzondi* or *mudi-mbimbi* or *mwidi-mvundi*. Among the Bayakas and Basukus in this area he is called *mwadi-nzita*. He is generally a man of great strength and faithfulness to the tradition of the tribe. He wears a native woven hat or a triangular piece of native cloth which is never removed in the presence of anyone but his favorite wife until the day of his death. He also wears twisted bracelets and anklets which are removed immediately prior to his death. When it is obvious that the 'priest' is about to die another priest is called who removes the head-cloth, the bracelets and the anklets, smears the body of the dying man with ashes or *pemba* (white wash) and says, "You are no longer a priest, another is to take your place and power."

Among the branches of the Bambala, Bayaka and the Basuku tribes living in the immediate area of the Mission the priest was never permitted to die "a natural death." Among one tribe firm hands were placed upon his head which was twisted to break the neck, another tribe poured boiling water into the departing man's mouth. In another tribe the priest who was called with a ceremonial knife took the life of the dying man.

Fortunately many of these practices are changing. In some areas they are done in secret. In still other areas of Congo life less crass, but more subtle practices have taken their place. Sometimes "holy water" has taken the place of the water supplied by the savage priest. Sometimes a religious medal has taken the place, or been placed alongside of a more crude amulet. Sometimes a church membership card or an offering to the local church has become the object of devotion, if not of worship and faith. Alas, in many areas of Congo religious life a vacuum, a void, a deadly cynicism has taken the place of a primitive worship born out of fear and terror,

a condition as impossible as a crass animism in an enlightened age.

The writer is firmly convinced that neither the highest form of civilization, nor the most Christian form of education alone holds the answer. They may contain beneficial contributing factors, but our Lord Jesus Christ alone holds the answer to deliverance from the fear of death, the terror of the spirit world, and the healing of the mental, moral and spiritual life. Only a constructive living faith in a victorious living Lord can drive out the fear and give hope in place of terror and joy in place of sorrow. Thousands once living in constant fear have found that perfect Love still casts out fear.

The writer has seen two priests of animism into whose lives Christ has been permitted to enter and who have been baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus pass on through the valley of death. Instead of horror, there was hope, instead of fear, faith, instead of mourning and wailing the families gathered around the parting chiefs to sing the hymns of faith and hope which they had learned. Today in the place of ancestor worship there is worship of the One Who has brought deliverance and hope. Instead of the thorn there has come to them the fir tree and instead of the brier has come the myrtle tree, instead of the wilderness a garden, and in place of thirst, the water of life and everlasting joy and peace, "... it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."[10]

1. Soper: *Faiths of Mankind. p. 7*
2. MacKenzie: *An African Trail. pp. 66,88*
3. Milligan: *Jungle Folk of Africa. pp. 252, 259, 266, 267.*
4. Addison: *Life Beyond Death. p. 7*
5. Romans 1:18-32
6. Ps. 3:2
7. Atkins: *Procession of the Gods. pp. 18-20*
8. Hetherwick: *The Gospel and the African. pp. 64, 65.*
9. MacKenzie: *The Spirit-Ridden Konde. p. 196*
10. Isaiah 55.

"The old fox has many holes."
(*ex. If someone wants to improve his work, or if a chief wants to be respected, he should take advice from others.*)

"OUR HEARTS ARE SO FULL WE CAN'T EAT"

V. L. SMITH

AS we were on our way to Boko two weeks ago our car broke down and we found ourselves at nightfall at least twelve miles from our destination and no way to get there unless we walked. A friendly passerby offered to walk the twelve miles to Boko to get help for us and we settled down to wait the five hours that would elapse before help could come.

Just off the road where we broke down was a tiny village of about eight or ten grass huts. The people ran out to greet us and to find out what had happened. After we had eaten some sandwiches, I decided to go over to the village and visit with the people. As we walked along together one little girl asked for my kerchief; then a little later she asked for my jacket. Apparently she was primarily interested in getting some of my clothes.

With the children all trailing along with me, I went from hut to hut and greeted the folk. It was the first time that a white person had stopped to visit in their village; there were no Christians there. The children chattered endlessly, each pulling at my hand to lead me to his home. And then they brought a chair for me and we sat together in the village street, the children on the ground around me and shoving one another to see who could get nearest and rest his hands or head on my lap. We taught one another songs and told one another stories until finally I asked them when they were going to eat. It was then that the little girl who had been begging my kerchief and my jacket, answered: "Oh Mama, YOU are here and our hearts are so full we cannot eat."

And with that she led me to the fire where her parents were seated and I told them the most wonderful story in the world about the true bread of life that takes away the hunger and fills the heart with such joy that nothing more is needed. And the little girl sat there listening with sparkling eyes. Jesus had come to her village !

NEWS NOTES

During the last month we have been happy to welcome back to Congo more missionaries who have been on furlough. Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Brown who will go to Kikongo, where they have already spent many years. Miss Eva Shepard will go to Sona Bata to take over the school work from Miss Vendla Anderson. Miss Phyllis Benner is returning to Leopoldville for the school work which she has done for so many years. These reinforcements are a wonderful boon to the staff which is already so burdened with work, but still there are not enough to carry on the work as it should be done.

This month was the closing month for our schools on all our stations and many classes have finished the 6 years of primary school as well as some finishing a short course in teacher training fitting them to teach in the lower classes in the primary school. At Banza Manteke they had an additional class of boys finishing the first cycle of the Secondary school, which is equivilent to the 9th grade. They have 3 more years to do to be prepared for teaching in any primary school grade. At Kimpese there were still other classes which finished a course of training. Some from the teachers' training school, some from a course in training for carpentry and masonry so that they can be helpers in the building programs. There was also a class of women who had spent 2 years training for teaching in the lower grades. These are all wives and mothers, so they had a real task to finish the course. At IME there was a class of medical assistants who finished their course.

REQUESTS FOR PRAYER

Please pray for the needed additional missionaries to help in the places where they are so much needed.

Please pray that these young people who are going out into the work may have the strength and leading of the Lord as they go.

"Give a promise when it is light."
(*ex. A reproof to those who promise to do something some other day, knowing that they may not do it.*)

DIRECTORY SUPPLEMENT

IN BELGIUM — new appointees, studying French for one year:
Mr. and Mrs. James B. Clark
Miss Rhoda Nielson, R.N.
Miss Elizabeth Spinney, R.N.

IN U. S. — completing preparations for service in Congo:
Miss Margaret Alsen
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Barnett
Mr. and Mrs. Brainerd Fraser
Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Stabell
Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Stuart

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"Dew cannot last when the sun comes out."

(*ex. Although a problem seems dubious or difficult, it can be settled by examination.*)

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* *Precede name of each station with A.B.F.M.S., except Kimpese*
† *All air-mail addressed via Léopoldville instead of Matadi*
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See Directory Supplement — p. 31